

Mah Jongg Etiquette, Tips & Rules

Don't touch other players tiles or racks

If a player asks for help and gives permission, then it's ok to touch their tiles otherwise don't.

Courtesy Wait

Please wait until everyone has passed before picking up and racking your tiles. (This is not an official rule but it helps keep track of where in the Charleston players are.)

Tile falls out of the wall (NMJL)

Put the tile back where it was. If that cannot be determined, place it approximately where it might have fallen out.

Tile falls on the floor (NMJL)

Only the person whose tile it is is supposed to retrieve the tile.

"RACK AND LOOK" (NMJL)

On your turn you pull a tile, RACK IT, then LOOK at the tile and see if it helps your hand. Also LOOK and see if you can use it to pick up a Joker from one of your opponent's exposures. If it satisfies neither, then discard it. (Racking means the tile must be played in the *sloped part of the rack* facing you. We call this "*in your rack*".)

"DOWN IS DOWN" (NMJL)

During a discard once a player names a tile or the tile is on the table, it is considered discarded and CANNOT be taken back.

Joker Exchange (NMJL)

You must draw a tile BEFORE exchanging for another person's joker. If you exchange WITHOUT racking a tile, your hand is dead. If you want an exposed joker on someone's rack, say "Exchange" or "Can I have your tile?" **NEVER** physically remove a joker from another person's rack. If you do, your hand is dead and you are out of the game.

"HOLD," "WAIT," "CALL," "I WANT THAT TILE" (NMJL)

If a player discards a tile and it might help your hand, you need to say immediately "HOLD," "WAIT," "CALL," or "I WANT THAT TILE".

Then think it over carefully. Double check your card. If you are certain, it will help your hand, take your tiles, and place them on top of your rack and then put the discarded tile with the ones you exposed on top of your rack. You do NOT have to take the tile you called but once you place it on top of your rack, you must keep it.

NEVER take a discarded tile and put it in your rack. If you do, you are dead.

Jokers (NMJL)

You can **never** pick up a discarded joker. You can **never** play a Joker with a single or pair. You can **never** pass a Joker in the Charleston.

Jokers may be redeemed from a “dead” hand if they were exposed prior to the hand being declared “dead.”

Never Call Your Own Hand Dead Hand (NMJL)

If you think your hand is dead (meaning it looks like you cannot complete the hand you chose to play), look at the card and try to find another hand that may work. If you are certain, you cannot make any hand, continue to play but do so defensively. This means you try to determine what hands others are playing and try to prevent them from getting Mah Jongg. **Only other players can call your hand dead. If a player says they think your hand is dead and it is, only then are you out of the game.**

Not enough tiles (NMJL)

If you find you do not have 13 tiles during play, then your hand is dead. Examples include discovering you have less than or more than 13 tiles.

Note: At the beginning of the game East will have 14 tiles until after the Charleston, when East discards one tile to start the game. Then all players should have 13 tiles.

Mah Jongg! (NMJL)

If a player thinks they have Mah Jongg, they say “***Mah Jongg***”. They must expose their tiles and tell which hand they were playing. Other players must *verify* the Mah Jongg is valid before the game is called. If someone calls “***Mah Jongg***”, **do not** throw your tiles until that Mah Jongg is verified as a valid hand. The game is **not** over until the Mah Jongg was verified.

Other Ways to Become “DEAD” (NMJL)

- Discarding a tile before picking a tile and racking
- Picking out of turn
- Picking from the wrong wall
- Picking from the wrong end of the wall
- If a player pushes out their wall before the previous wall is exhausted, causing another player to pick from the wrong wall, both players are dead
- When a player declares Mah Jongg in error and exposes their hand, the hand is declared dead
- If someone discarding a tile incorrectly names that tile and someone uses it for an exposure, the exposer’s hand is dead. Misnamer is not penalized. A tile must be correctly named before used for an exposure unless it is for Mah Jongg. In the case of Mah Jongg with an incorrectly named tile, the misnamer pays claimant four times the value on the card.
- If a tile is called for Mah Jongg in error, that tile remains with the dead hand even if another player wanted the same tile for exposure.
- A player whose hand has been declared dead must remain silent for the remainder of that hand.